Ari Ne'eman

JOHNS HOPKINS
WHITING SCHOOL *of* ENGINEERING | **Computer Science**

"Disability and Health Equity: Reflections on Causality and Disparities"

📅 Thursday, December 9, 2021

🕐 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

▥ https://wse.zoom.us/j/98610322413
Meeting ID: 986 1032 2413

ABSTRACT

Over the course of the last fifty years, American society has undergone a significant paradigm shift in how it approaches people with disabilities. Laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act and public investments in Home and Community-Based Services reflect a belief that the problems of disability are not inevitable results of biology, but instead reflect an interaction between impairment and a range of societal factors. Though public policy is increasingly acknowledging the role of systemic injustice in the gaps between disabled and non-disabled persons, more work is needed to adapt the frameworks of quantitative social science to reflect this more nuanced approach to causality.

These questions have concrete implications for public policy. As the health care system shifts away from fee-for-service, policymakers are increasingly tasked with measuring quality and holding health plans and providers accountable for outcomes. Disability is often an important input into risk-adjustment and quality measurement strategies in such contexts. Decisions regarding how to attribute causality for differences in outcomes between disabled and non-disabled persons may impact plan and provider behavior, incentivizing both positive and negative responses, depending on the choices made. In this talk, I will frame these challenges in the context of prior work addressing similar issues in the realm of racial disparities. When measuring differences in outcomes between disabled and non-disabled persons, what are appropriate and inappropriate control variables? To what should we attribute to systemic injustice as opposed to biological impairment? How do these decisions influence key policy choices regarding risk-adjustment and quality measurement in our health care system?

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HOW TO REACH US

✉ Contactus@cs.jhu.edu
☎ 410-516-8775
🌐 cs.jhu.edu

Johns Hopkins University
Department of Computer Science
3400 N. Charles St | Malone 160
Baltimore, MD 21218